



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Accomplishment Report

The Alpena Fishery Resources Office (Alpena FRO) is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Great Lakes Big Rivers Region.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Maiden Assessment Cruise on the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

During the month of October, two cruises were made with the *M/V Spencer F. Baird* to perform annual adult lake trout spawning surveys on two offshore reefs in Lake Huron. Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski and Adam Kowalski along with Project Leader Jerry McClain were the biological crew for the assessment work. Captain Mike Perry, Marine Engineer Robert Bergstrom, and contractual employee Mark Brown were the vessel crew.



On October 18th, the *M/V Baird* departed the federal dock in Alpena and traveled to Six Fathom Bank. Three gangs of gill nets were deployed on this reef and retrieved on October 19th after anchoring for the night off the reef. On October 20th, the vessel departed for Yankee Reef where

two gangs of gill net were deployed and lifted the following day after anchoring for the night off the reef. In recent years, it has been difficult to conduct the assessment at both reefs given the tumultuous weather that October brings and safety issues surrounding the aging vessel *M/V Togue*. This year we were able to complete surveys at both reefs in a single week while working off the more stable and comfortable work platform provided by the *M/V Baird*. The difference between the two vessels is night and day and the *M/V Baird* will be an excellent vessel for fulfilling the Fish and Wildlife Service obligations towards lake trout restoration and enhancing our ability to contribute to the lakewide assessment program.

This is another example Alpena FRO and Jordan River National Fish Hatchery's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability".

Alpena FRO Tags Lake Whitefish One More Time (Year 3 of 3)

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

On November 7 and 8 staff from the Alpena Fisheries Resource Office (FRO) participated in a USFWS Restoration Act funded Lake Huron lake whitefish distribution study. Service staff involved included Treaty Unit Coordinator Aaron Woldt, Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski, Scott Koproski, Susan Wells, and Anjie Bowen, and Fish and Wildlife Biologist Heather Rawlings. Staff conducted all tagging operations on the commercial trap-net boat the *Blonnie W* operated by Jim Presau Fisheries.

The goals of this study were to determine the spatial distribution and movement patterns of 8 selected lake whitefish stocks in Lake Huron and to determine the contribution of each stock to commercial fishery yields. The 8 stocks selected for this study were Detour, Alpena (Middle Island & Thunder Bay), Saginaw Bay, Burnt Island, South Bay mouth, the Fishing Islands, Douglas Point, and Sarnia. In all, 7 state, federal, tribal, and provincial partner agencies participated in this study. In 2004 and 2005 combined, study partners tagged and released over 21,000 lake whitefish in Lake Huron. The Service tagged 3,021 lake whitefish in 2004 and 2005 combined. To date, over 620 tagged lake whitefish have been harvested and reported by Lake Huron fishers.



In 2006, Service staff successfully Floy tagged and released 1,533 lake whitefish near Middle Island. Michigan DNR staff tagged approximately 1,500 lake whitefish in Thunder Bay in November, 2006. Tagged fish were measured for length, checked for lamprey wounds, sexed, assessed for maturity, scale sampled for ageing purposes, fin clipped, and released. A random subset of fish were also detained shortly prior to release to measure short term tag retention and handling mortality. Approximately 200 fish were lethally sampled and processed as well. Data from this study will be entered into a common database maintained by the Alpena FRO. Combined study data, including 2006 tagging, will be distributed to study partners early in 2007.

Studying the spatial distribution and movement patterns of lake whitefish stocks will allow managers to determine if the borders of current management units are biologically meaningful and to determine the contribution of each stock to the commercial fishery. This will allow for better harvest management and protection of lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Coded Wire Tag Extraction

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

During the month of October 2006, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski extracted and read coded-wire-tags (CWTs) from lake trout. CWTs are microscopic metal tags placed in the snouts of juvenile lake trout at the hatchery. Lake trout heads were collected during the spring fishery independent lake whitefish survey conducted by the Alpena FRO. Kowalski also extracted and read CWTs from lake trout sampled by the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources. CWTs are extracted by cutting lake trout snouts into smaller and smaller pieces until the tag can be seen and removed. CWTs are read under a microscope, and each tag's unique number is recorded. The tag number, when compared to stocking records, yields information such as stocking location, stocking date, fish age, fish strain, and hatchery of origin.

In total, Kowalski removed and read over 100 tags from approximately 125 heads. Not all adipose clipped lake trout contain CWTs, because some lake trout shed their tag and some are erroneously fin clipped. Additional lake trout heads will be received from Bay Mills Indian Community (BMIC), Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA), and the Michigan DNR creel program. These heads will be processed when received.

Data collected from lake trout CWTs are used to determine harvest limits, stocking locations, movement patterns, and post stocking survival rates of various hatchery practices. These outcomes are consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while providing recreational fishing opportunities and meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Partners for Fish and Wildlife 2006 Wetland Construction Complete

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Construction on the final eight wetland sites scheduled for FY2006 was completed October 5th for the Alpena FRO Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. Six sites were located in Ogemaw County on the property of two different landowners, and two sites were in Montmorency County on a single landowner's property. In all, 14 acres of wetland were restored or enhanced. Nine acres were located in open, fallow field, and five acres were restored to a wooded wetland.



In addition to the October wetland construction, five landowner visits were conducted, and three wetland sites were surveyed for potential construction in 2007. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program restores/enhances wetlands for the benefit of migratory birds, shorebirds, reptiles, and amphibians. Wetlands are shallow, with an average depth of approximately two feet. The Alpena FRO restored 88 total acres of wetland on 23 sites in FY2006.

Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects contributes toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Michigan Stream Team Presentation

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Biologist Heather Rawlings presented an overview of the Michigan Stream Team's objectives and goals on September 17, 2006 at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Fisheries Division Annual Meeting. The meeting was held in Alpena, MI at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, Michigan Air National Guard base. Approximately 40 biologists

from the MDNR Fisheries Research Division and management unit supervisors from northern Michigan attended the meeting. The presentation was well-received, and the group requested an annual update from Michigan Stream Team representatives.

Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects contributes toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Thunder Bay Project Implementation Working Committee Meeting

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt participated in a Working Committee meeting for the Thunder Bay Power Company Thunder Bay River Project Implementation. The Working Committee was created to assist Thunder Bay Power (TBP) and its parent company North American Hydro (NAH) in meeting the requirements of its Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license. Biologist Woldt is the Service representative on the Working Committee.

The primary focus of the November 14, 2006 meeting was to review results of NAH's 2006 purple loosestrife, Eurasian watermilfoil, and erosion sites monitoring activities. In addition, the Working Committee also discussed NAH's water quality plan for 2007, an update on the project wildlife plan, a recent FERC potential failure mode analysis, and the proposed fishing pier at the Hubbard Lake site. The fishing pier issue has been ongoing for some time and involves moving the proposed structure to the opposite side of the river as initially planned. The proposed area across the road is primarily wetland, and feasibility of using this site will require input from Michigan DEQ.

The meeting was attended by member representatives from Michigan DNR, NAH, and the Service. In addition representatives from the Montmorency Conservation District, Thunder Bay Audubon Society, and Northeast Michigan Council of Governments also participated.

Service involvement in the TBP Working Committee provides opportunities to minimize or mitigate the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species caused by hydropower facilities in the Thunder Bay River system. This outcome is consistent with the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Partnerships and Accountability

Alpena FRO Meets to Discuss Outlook for Alpena Federal Building

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain met with Mr. Harold Chase, District Office Manager for Senator Carl Levin, on October 25 to discuss the future of the Alpena Federal Building and progress in locating alternatives for housing the Alpena FRO. Senator Levin closed his office in the Alpena Federal Building in 2004 but remains concerned about the conditions for remaining tenants in the building. At the present time only the Alpena FRO and the U.S. Coast Guard are occupying space in the building and both are seeking alternate locations due to the deteriorating environmental and personnel safety conditions of the aging building. Mr. Chase held a similar meeting with the Coast Guard in early October.

Although the Senator is not seeking a specific resolution to the issue he has committed that his staff will assist the two agencies in working with GSA to meet their office needs. Mr. Chase indicated that he would be drafting a letter of inquiry for the Senator's signature that would go to GSA and the regional or district offices of the two agencies seeking an update on progress in the search for new space.

Continued interaction between the Alpena FRO and district congressional offices is important in keeping the legislators and their staff aware of the important work being done by Service staff in their districts and states. Meetings such as this are important for addressing the Service's Fisheries program Vision for the Future priorities of "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Workforce Management".

Public Use

The Annual Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival was a Success

*Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist*

The 2006 Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival was held in Alpena, Michigan on October 13, 14, and 15. Lighthouses around the Great Lakes were showcased along with their associated aquatic



resources. The Alpena FRO and Jordan River NFH represented the Service at this event. The M/V Spencer F. Baird was present and staffed with personnel from the Jordan River NFH to give tours and describe the operation of the boat and its role in lake trout restoration. Biologist Wells put up a display depicting operations conducted by the Alpena FRO and the Service. Informational brochures and children's aquatic resources quiz games were displayed at the booth. The boat, booth, and games were a success with both children and adults. Approximately 3,000 people attended at the festival.

This accomplishment was an educational and outreach opportunity providing an outlet to educate and interact with youth groups on issues regarding Great Lakes aquatic resources. We were able to showcase the Service to the public and educate people on the aquatic resources available in the Great Lakes. Approximately 3,000 people attended the Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival. This project addresses the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority for "Public Use".

Workforce Management

Biologist Attends Leadership Training

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

From October 23 to November 3 Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO attended Stepping Up to Leadership training at the National Conservation Training Center. The primary objectives of this training are to help attendees articulate a personal vision of leadership, integrate Service leadership competencies into their personal development and career plans, and exhibit leadership behaviors that support the Service's mission. Topics covered included effective communication, giving and receiving feedback, team communications, group dynamics, power and influence, and the life of a Service leader. Students must complete several interim projects over the next 6 months and return to NCTC for a closeout session in March 2007.

Continued educational opportunities are consistent with the Service's goal of providing employees with opportunities to maintain competencies and improve opportunities for professional achievement under the "Workforce Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Biologist Completes Detail

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

From October 2 to 20 Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO served as Acting Project Leader at the Ashland FRO in Ashland, WI. The Ashland FRO has been without a permanent Project Leader since Mark Dryer retired in June 2006. Woldt was happy to detail to the Ashland

office, shoulder some of the workload, learn some new skills, and help station staff fulfill office objectives and the Service mission.

Continued educational opportunities are consistent with the Service's goal of providing employees with opportunities to maintain competencies and improve opportunities for professional achievement under the "Workforce Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

For more information about Alpena FRO programs and activities contact us at:

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